



## Who Are You? Who, Who, Who, Who?

By Stephen M. Perle, DC, MS

Beyond the title, this isn't an homage to The Who. This discussion is prompted by an advertisement I received in the mail. It was from an organization with a fancy-sounding name. I'm not about to advertise for the group, so I'll make up a new name. I'll call the organization The Great Doctors Foundation. The foundation exists to help doctors snag a piece of the Affordable Care Act (also known as "health care reform") money. The advertisement was all about how the foundation would teach doctors the ways to change their practice to make it easy to get access to all that extra money that health care reform was going to make available for people who were smart enough to properly use the systems created by the Affordable Care Act. Given the complexity of the legislation, most doctors will not read the law, so the foundation may seem like a godsend.

The advertisement seemed to suggest this organization was going to help me out in an altruistic way. The offer included that key word – *free*. Given that the name of the organization included the word *foundation*, it really seemed on the up-and-up. Foundations are nonprofit charities often set up by some philanthropist. However, I'd never heard of this particular foundation, despite the fact that I try to keep abreast of what is going on in the profession.

If this had been 20 years ago, I would have had a hard time finding out much more. But thanks to Google, it was rather easy. I Googled the phone number the advertisement said to call to join the foundation. To be honest, I wasn't that surprised when the phone number was the primary number of a practice management company. I wasn't surprised because the advertisement was all about how to make more money using the Affordable Care Act.

My point here is not what was offered by the "foundation," but that it was advertised as a foundation. This is similar to the situation in which a doctor of chiropractic advertises his office with The Spine Center – Dr. Smith, Medical Director. In other words, they avoid the labels chiropractor, doctor of chiropractic, chiropractic physician, or DC.

There is nothing wrong with naming the office "The Spine Center," but why avoid identifying the doctor as a doctor of chiropractic (or similar designation)? In many states, to avoid doing so is actually illegal. We have a moral duty to follow the law unless we find the law morally reprehensible (along the lines of Henry David Thoreau's *Essay on Civil Disobedience*). I do not think that any chiropractor who avoids letting it be known that they are a doctor of chiropractic can lay claim to the moral high ground of disobeying a statute that is immoral. It appears that the doctor who leaves their type of health care degree/qualification off any advertisements or signage is doing so with the intent to deceive the potential patient pool of what kind of doctor runs "The Spine Center."

I know the rationalization here: "The public has misconceptions about us, so if they can actually meet me, they will find out the misconceptions are just that: misconceptions." Well, I don't know about that. I think a lying to get a patient through your door is just an unethical sales gimmick. Some people will fall for it, but what will people who realize they have been tricked into seeing a chiropractor think? In the past [[April 4, 2006 issue](#)], I called this "Poisoning the Well."

Here's what I just don't get. How do companies expect to establish a business relationship with a doctor when the relationship is founded on a lie – the kind of company the doctor is working with? How do doctors expect to establish a relationship with a patient when the relationship is founded on a lie – what kind of doctor the patient is being treated by? I am sure some doctors will ignore the lie and come to find their relationship with the practice management company is a good one. Likewise, some patients will also ignore the lie and come to trust the doctor. But as The Who continue, "Tell me, who are you? 'Cause I really wanna know."

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